

JOB CHARACTERISTICS AFFECTING EMPLOYEES' JOB INVOLVEMENT IN FAST  
FOOD INDUSTRY

NURUL SALWANA BINTI MOHAMAD KAMAL

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## ABSTRACT

Employees' job involvement has been found decreasing over the change of time. Therefore, the issue relates with employees' job involvement is getting concern from other researchers due to lack of previous studies done for it. The purpose of this research is to investigate the factor of job characteristics model (JCM) (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback of the job) that affects KFC fast food restaurant employee job involvement in Malaysia. In this research project, quantitative method has been used as method of questionnaire in order to collect data from respondents. Questionnaires were administrated in KFC fast food restaurant in Rawang Branch, Selangor. Besides that, questionnaire also was distributed by using closed-ended question method. The pilot test has been conducted to analyses the reliability of the question before actual study. This research used Pearson correlation coefficient to analyses 86 responses from the questionnaire obtained. Moreover, multiple regressions revealed that the five sources of factors (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback of the job) had significant positive relationship with employee job involvement in Malaysia. Furthermore, this research also will explore which factor in JCM will affect employees' job involvement in KFC fast food industry in Rawang, Selangor.

## ABSTRAK

Penglibatan pekerja dalam pekerjaan telah dilihat berkurangan disebabkan perubahan masa yang berlaku. Oleh itu, isu berkaitan dengan kebimbangan penglibatan pekerja dalam pekerjaan semakin mendapat perhatian daripada penyelidik lain kerana kekurangan kajian dilakukan sebelum ini. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji faktor ciri model kerja (JCM) (pelbagai kemahiran, identiti tugas, kepentingan tugas, autonomi dan maklum balas kerja) yang mempengaruhi restoran makanan segera iaitu KFC mengenai penglibatan pekerja dalam pekerjaan di Malaysia. Dalam projek penyelidikan ini, kaedah kuantitatif telah digunakan sebagai kaedah soal selidik untuk mengumpul data daripada responden. Soal selidik telah dijalankan di cawangan restoran KFC di Rawang, Selangor. Selain itu, soal selidik ini telah menggunakan kaedah soalan tertutup. 'Pilot Test' telah dijalankan bagi mendapat analisis kebolehpercayaan sebelum kajian sebenar dijalankan. Kajian ini menggunakan "Pearson correlation coefficient" untuk menganalisis 86 response daripada soalan yang diperolehi semula. Selain itu, 'Multiple Regression Analysis' digunakan untuk membuktikan bahawa lima sumber faktor-faktor (pelbagai kemahiran, identiti tugas, kepentingan tugas, autonomi dan maklum balas kerja) mempunyai hubungan positif yang ketara dengan penglibatan pekerja dalam pekerjaan di Malaysia. Kajian ini juga dijalankan untuk menjelaskan dengan lebih terperinci mengenai faktor di dalam ciri model kerja yang akan mempengaruhi penglibatan pekerja dalam pekerjaan di restoran KFC sebagai industri makanan segera di Rawang, Selangor.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>JCM</b>	Job Characteristics Model
<b>KFC</b>	Kentucky Fried Chicken
<b>FFSI</b>	Fast Food Service Industry
<b>SV</b>	Skill Variety
<b>TI</b>	Task Identity
<b>TS</b>	Task Significance
<b>AT</b>	Autonomy
<b>FJ</b>	Feedback of the Job
<b>JC</b>	Job Characteristics
<b>JI</b>	Job Involvement

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of conducting this research is to explore and understand the job characteristic factors that generate a huge impact on job involvement in fast food industry. Job characteristics are adapted from the Job Characteristics Model (JCM) that proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1975) that consists of five dimensions.

JCM consists of (1) skill variety that indicates the extent of which employee must use variety of skills to perform the work, (2) task identity that extent to an individual is able to complete a whole pieces of work, (3) task significance that extent a job have an impacts to others, (4) autonomy that the sense of freedom and independence an individual has in crying out work and (5) feedback from job that indicates how much employee know about their own job performance form the job itself (Hackman and Oldham, 1975).

Gan Chia Seng, Hew Woon Xia, Kong Yuet Tong and Tam Yun Chin (2012) found that job characteristics serve an important framework in examining the degree of employees' job involvement. Job characteristics with motivating potentials can increase employees' display of job involvement and may reduce

employee turnover intention and job stress. When organization intends to assess the degree of employee's job involvement, managers should consider the five core job characteristics to effectively evaluate the relationship between these two.

The study of Hafer and Martin (2006) found that employee build up attitudes about their job and willingness to remain as part of the organization. Then the attitude have a linkage to the employees' level of involvement in their jobs which means that when employees' job involvement is high, they will be more willing to perform any task assigned to him or her (Pringle, 1994). Aside from that, job involvement can also be defined as the enthusiasm of a person towards his or her job (Pollock, 1997). Pollock believed that people who like and interested with their jobs are more likely to perform their works effectively and productively compared to those who dislike their current jobs.

Meanwhile, job involvement is recognised as a key factor affecting critical individual and organisational outcomes (Chughtai, 2008). Hence, without a doubt the importance of job involvement should not be ignored. In order to help fast food industry to cope with the problem of lower job involvement among the employees which then lead to higher turnover rate and poor customer service (Dimitriades, 2007), we carry out the study to further explore the determinants influencing the level of job involvement in the fast food industry. With this study, fast food restaurants' owners are believed to enhance in knowledge in improving employees' job involvement, either by oversee or regulating the major determinants of job involvement.

Nowadays, according to Hafer and Martin (2006), most managers' job aspects are to comprehend, predict, and improve employees' behaviour. Managers always attempt to determine work-related attitudes in order to make behavioural changes. They are depending on restraint variables, such as the significance, specificity and accessibility of the attitude, the consequences of social pressures exist between attitudes, and the direct experience of the employees towards the attitude that affect what employees behaviourally do. In the research of Freund (as

cited in Hafer and Martin, 2006), he found that job involvement has been perceived as work-related attitudes and it has been used as work-related outcomes' predictors.

As cited in Gan Chia Seng et al. (2012), they stated Ishfaq and Talat (2011) belief "due to the fast growing pace in fast food industry, a firm performance has been viewed as a criterion that will influence its business long-term succession. In order to improve firm performance, organisation should firstly improve its employees' performance. This action is necessary especially in the fast food industry where workers are the major and essential asset to the business survival. To make employees fully contributed to the company, firm should always ensure that they are fully involved in their job. An entirely employee involvement would more willing to perform or perform better than an employee that only engages in his job. In other words, job involvement may influence the employee and organisational outcomes". Besides, this observing can promote a strong future for the restaurants in term of preventing them from losses and insolvency.

## **1.2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND**

Due to the revolutions over time, the restaurants that began in France during 18<sup>th</sup> have built up the concept of "Fast Food" in the food service industry. The major players in this industry which operates internationally included McDonald's, KFC, Pizza Hut, A&W Restaurants, Burger King, Dunkin' Donuts, Domino pizza and others.

According Brother Ton and Wood (as cited in Blomme, Rheede, and Tromp, 2010), hospitality industry included a wide variety of service industries, such as food service, tourism, hotels and casinos. As a result, it undoubted revealed that "Fast Food Restaurant" is under the service industry. Thus, Fast Food Industry sometimes may refer to as "Fast Food Service Industry (FFSI)" (Akdag & Dogan, 2001). Undeniably, service plays an essential role in the fast food industry.

In addition, according to Manila Review (as cited in Food Service Industry in the Philippines, 2010), as cited in Schneider & White (2004) “Fast Food” is relating to selling quick, inexpensive take-out by a restaurant. Fast food restaurants are normally under a restaurant chain or franchise operation, which cater homogenised ingredients and/or partially prepared foods and supplies to each restaurant through well-established supply channels.

According to Blau and Boal as cited in Michael and Donna (1999), they found that employees’ job involvement has a high connection with their performance. Once again, this clearly verify that highly job involved employees can bring enormous contribution to the organisational success and effectiveness. Therefore inattentive the type of organisation, employees’ job involvement is of paramount important issue to the employers.

Regarding this issue, there are many factors that contribute to the employees’ job involvement. The most general factors that commonly addressed by past researchers includes (1) employee’s motivation, (2) employees’ personality, (3) training, (4) job characteristic, (4) employees’ satisfaction, (5) organisation culture, (6) employees’ demographic characteristics, (7) employees’ well-being, (8) organisations’ social climate, and (9) opportunities for employees to participate in decision making.

As a result, studying the factors that affecting employees’ job involvement in the fast food industry becomes a major concern among all the players in the fast-food industry. Since employees’ job involvement strictly affects employee’s efforts and the firm’s performance, our research will particularly focus on studying the factor of job characteristic affecting employees’ job involvement in the fast food industry and in the hope that this study could help the organisation’s to manage its human resources more successfully and effectively.

### 1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENTS

According to Jekanowski & Binkley (2001), as cited in Datamonitor (2005), most fast food industry in Asia worth billions each year and is growing in an on-going basis. Fast food industry is known as one of the world's fastest growing food types. It is now accountable approximately half of all restaurants' revenues in developed countries and it continues to develop there and in many other industrialised countries in the coming years.

Additionally, Hall (2010) stated that front line employees have contributed significantly to an organisation's competitive advantage and could have a serious effect on its bottom line. He also declared that the work performance of employees in fast food industry would directly lead to customer satisfactions or dissatisfaction since they are the one who face directly with customers.

In addition, according to the research conducted in Malaysia by Converging Knowledge Pte Ltd (as cited in Summary of the Independent Market Research Report, 2011; Gan Chia Seng, 2012), Malaysia food service industry is highly competitive. Every player in this industry always encounters with challenge in enhancing the standards and innovating their food offerings in order to attract more customers.

Apart from that, Dienhart and Downey (1991) had stated that "Service-oriented employees are important to virtually every job in a foodservice organization because they promote the organization's public image and the quality of life in the workplace" (Dienhart and Downey, 1991). As a result, to better serve customers in any foodservice industry, the company should understand the service's components and determine the impact of employees' service orientation which would lead to foodservice operation's success.

Some researchers (Huselid and Day, 1991) have peaked out that this scenario happened is due to the lower level of job involvement and job commitment among the employees. However, there is little research has been carried out in this

field (Datamonitor, 2005), due to this judgment, many fast food restaurants' owners insufficient of relevant knowledge in solving this problem. Consequently, the morale of employees kept decreasing and they are getting less involved in their job (Ouyang, 2009).

In other aspect, the study of Hafer and Martin found that employees build up attitudes about their job and their willingness to remain as a part of the organisation. These attitudes have an immediate connection to the employees' level of involvement in their jobs, significance that when employees' job involvement is high, they will be more willing to perform any task assigned by their supervisor (Pringle, 1994).

#### **1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This research is aiming to determine the job characteristic's factor that contribute to employee's job involvement in fast food industry. The research is trying to achieve the following objectives:

- 1.4.1. To find out the critical factor dimension of job characteristics' affecting employees' job involvement.
- 1.4.2. To determine the relationship between factor of job characteristics' and employees' job involvement.

#### **1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- 1.5.1. What is the critical factor dimension of job characteristics' affecting employees' job involvement?
- 1.5.2. Is there any relationship between factor of job characteristics' and employees' job involvement?

## **1.6. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

$H_1$ : There is a positive correlation between skill variety of job characteristic and employees' job involvement.

$H_2$ : There is a positive correlation between task identity of job characteristics' and employees' job involvement.

$H_3$ : There is a positive correlation between task significance of job characteristic and employees' job involvement.

$H_4$ : There is a positive correlation between autonomy of job characteristics' and employees' job involvement.

$H_5$ : There is a positive correlation between feedback from job of job characteristic and employees' job involvement.

$H_6$ : There is a positive correlation between the critical factor dimension of job characteristics' and employees' job involvement.

## **1.7. SIGNIFICANT OF STUDY**

The fast food industry is becoming disgraced as it has a bad reputation pertaining to higher job instability. The holder of the restaurants, managers, co-workers, shareholders, and customers are undergoing the impact of low level of employees' job involvement.

Therefore, this research paper aims to help fast food restaurant's owners and managers to have a better understanding on how factor of job characteristics will influence the employees' job involvement. Coincidentally, this study is critically essential for the firms in fast food industry as it provides better ways of understanding on how to enhance the employees' job involvement through analysing the factors of job characteristics' that affecting the employees' job

involvement. Indeed, this research also forms the backbone of future research on employees' job involvement.

#### **1.7.1. Significant to the manager**

The managers who are influenced in this circumstance are needed to identify and execute the practices and policies that help to retain employees' job involvement and enable the employees to feel that their jobs are worth to do. Besides that, managers can use the result of this study to design and develop strategies as well as plans to increase employees' job involvement. In addition, this finding can promote a strong future for the restaurants in term of preventing them from losses.

#### **1.7.2. Significant to the worker**

Co-workers can be influenced by the employees' attitudes and behaviours as well. For instance, if the employees have low job involvement, it will cause high turnover among co-workers too. As cited in Gan Chia Seng et al. (2012) Hall (2010) specify "The employees in these jobs are always being looked down by customers, which provoke the negative perception by the employees. Hence, it leads to (1) high turnover rates, (2) poor service, (3) job dissatisfaction, and (4) low job involvement". As the result, conducting this study will enhance the knowledge in service industry as well as the fast food industry. In fact, it also assist to the literature on number of factors that affect the employees' job involvement. Therefore, this study will enhance and benefit the fast food restaurants with the knowledge of the job characteristics factor dimension that affecting employees' job involvement.

### **1.8. SCOPE OF STUDY**

This study will focus on Job Characteristics' factor dimension that will affect employees' job involvement in fast food industry. Since employees' job

involvement instantly affects employee's efforts and the firm's performance, this research will definitely focus on studying the job characteristics' factors dimension affecting employees' job involvement in the fast food industry.

Questionnaire has been chosen in collecting primary data. The questionnaires were distributed to respondents through face to face as well as e-mail. This method of distribution is an effective way to collect data from a large sample of working people within a short period. The respondents for this study are those workers who work or worked in KFC restaurants. The study target fairly all the employees from these restaurants, in other word the respondents consist of workers from all hierarchy level in the fast food restaurant, which include part-timer to permanent staff as well as management level workers to a general worker.

## **1.9. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS**

1.9.1. **Job Characteristics** – job characteristics consists of (1) skill variety, (2) task significance, (3) task identity, (4) autonomy and (5) feedback. These dimensions have a positive influenced to motivated employees. Job characteristics will be used to enhance employee internal motivation that will lead to higher job involvement as they have desires to devote more effort to their jobs.

1.9.2. **Job Involvement** – job involvement was defined as the degree to which a job situation is a central of life interest. It also defined how a person totally involved in his or her job. In other word, a person who has high level of job involvement in workplace should perform better and generate greater work outcome.

1.9.3. **Factor Dimension** – factor dimension was a factor that based on Job Characteristics Model (JCM) that proposed by Hackman and Oldham. This factor will be accessing to find how it influenced the employee job involvement. This factor will be used to enhance employee job involvement to contribute to the greater individual performance.

1.9.4. **Effect to Job Involvement** – JCM can create consequences of the factor dimension toward employee involvement. It will be used to showed, in which aspects should be manage by a manager to enhance employee's performance value. The effect of job involvement from job characteristics will be used for developing a suitable system to deal with different employee's behavior.

## **1.10. EXPECTED OUTCOME**

1.10.1. To determine the relationship between factor of job characteristics' and employees' job involvement.

This study will showed is there any correlation between job characteristics factor dimension with employees' job involvement. It also will show how to enhance employee involvement for a greater contribution toward company according to Job Characteristics Model. It will show to the manager about the aspects needs to give more attention for increasing customer value perception towards fast food employee.

1.10.2. To find out the critical factor dimension of job characteristics' affecting employees' job involvement.

This study will show about the critical factor that will be acquired in the five dimensions of job characteristics to the successful involving employee toward better contribution of work. The study is conducted to find why the factor needs to be entertained more precisely for getting employee commitment. In addition, manager used the result to produce a great strategy for encouraging employee job involvement toward the task given and enlarging motivation factor in employee itself.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is about literature review, where it reveals the information that has been used by various researches to carry out further studies. Thus, it is considered as secondary sources. Literature review can be defined as a process of gathering information from different sources such as journals, articles, newspapers, internet and others. In this chapter the study discovers a number of factors that influence employees' job involvement in the fast food industry. But, this study only focuses on the Job Characteristics' factor that will influence employees' job involvement. As a consequence, the chosen factors are (1) skill variety, (2) task significance, (3) task variety, (4) autonomy and (5) feedback as well as being proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1975).

Furthermore, the entire selected factor would be tested scientifically. In the end, the study would have a clearer picture regarding the Job Characteristics' factor affecting employees' job involvement in the fast food industry.

## 2.2. JOB INVOLVEMENT

The first concept of job involvement was originally developed by Lodahl and Kejner in 1965. They defined job involvement as the degree to which a person's self-esteem was influenced by his or her performance of work. Later on, this idea was further studied by Kanungo (as cited in Ho, 2006). He tried to exclude any doubtfulness about the concept of job involvement and enhance the measurement inadequacies that happened in the previous research.

As cited in Akhtar and Udham (2010), he defined job involvement as the individual's belief towards his or her present job and he also stated that job involvement acts as a catalyst to satisfy the individual present's needs. In addition, he had clarified the difference between job and work. Whereby, he defined a job as an individual's current work, whereas a work as work in general. Muchinsky explained job involvement as the extent whereby individuals are ego-involved in their work. Besides, Sherman, Bohlander and Snell ascertained job involvement as the degree of identification that employees realised in their jobs and the degree of importance they perceived in their jobs (Govender and Parumasur, 2010).

According to the latest job involvement's research, Uygur and Kilic (as cited in Khalid and Rashid Rehman, 2011) specify job involvement as motivation to carry out work and it is highly compatible between personal and organisational goals, which encourages motivation among the employees to generate positive work outcomes. Hung (2008) stated based on Liao and Lee (2009) that job involvement is one's cognitive needs' fulfilment, which assists him or her to work harder and boost up his or her performance. Indeed, a higher degree of job involvement among the members of an organisation is essential to enhance the organisational effectiveness (Hung, 2008). Besides that, Ishfaq and Talat (2011) found there are four ways to categorise job involvement which consists of (a) actively contribution to the job, (b) work as the central life of interest, (c) performance compatibility with the self-concepts, and (d) performance as central to self-esteem.

Ramsey, Lassk, and Marshall stated that employees who view their work as the central life of interest will have greater opportunity to fulfill their major needs. While, employees who assist actively in their job that provides the chance to make decisions and play an essential role in the organisations' goals will assist them to obtain high self-esteem and self-regard. In this research, the study adopts Kanungo definition for the job involvement aspect as most of the researches of job involvement are relying on his definition. Hung (2008) mentioned that employees will be motivated to work harder and upgrade their performance once their mental needs are fulfilled.

At times, Blau, Boal, Lawler, Hackett, Lapierre, and Hausdorf (as cited in Ishfaq et al., 2011) express that employees with high job involvement would not late or absent from their work. Also, highly job involved individual would have fewer excuses (such as illness or transportation problems) and pay more attention on their job and hence reduce absenteeism and turnover intention. Moreover, based on the research of Preffer, Hackman and Lawler (as cited in Chughtai, 2008), cultivating job involvement is an essential organizational objective as there are many researchers believe that it is a primary stimulus of organisational effectiveness and individual's motivation.

Finally, Brown (as cited in Chughtai, 2008) argued that job characteristics, such as (1) job autonomy, (2) task identity,(3) skill variety,(4) task significance, (5) feedback and also supervisory behaviours, including (1) participative decision making, (2) leader consideration, and (3) amount of communication have significantly linked to job involvement.

According to Lodahl and Kejner (as cited in Govender and Parumasur, 2010; Gan Chia Seng, 2012), he held that job involvement encompasses four sub-dimensions:

- a) **Response to work:** In this dimension, Lodahl and Kejner used the expectancy theory to elaborate it. Under this theory, it has been defined that employees will respond to their work base on different expectations

about their work they possess and the extent of these expectations are achieved will be able to determine the level of job involvement they experience. Riipen (as cited in Govender et al., 2010) criticised that employees' needs fulfillment due to the congruence between job expectations and the job itself will produce higher level of job involvement.

- b) **Expressions of being job involved:** It has been explained that the expression of employees on job involvement is different from one and another with the level of job involvement experienced. For instance, some employees may state that they have high job involvement by thinking of the job even when they are not at work. Conversely, others may feel depressed if they fail at something related to the job (Lodahl, and Kejner, 1965)
- c) **Sense of duty towards work:** A highly involved individual would have a great sense of duty towards work. It is because they feel great with their work. For instance, in order to complete an assigned task, an employee is willing to work overtime without pay.
- d) **Feelings about unfinished work and absenteeism:** A highly involved employee will try to prevent being absent from work and feel guilty about unfinished work (Lodahl, and Kejner, 1965). It is because they feel excite and comfortable with their job in the workplace.

### 2.3. JOB CHARACTERISTICS

According to Seashore, and Taber (1978), in the Chen and Chiu (2009) research job “characteristics refer to work-related factors or attributes that include the nature of the work itself and job-related skills, benefits, environment, autonomy, salary, job security, challenges, feedback, knowledge learned, interpersonal relationships as well as developmental opportunities” (as cited in Chen and Chiu, 2009).